

6/6/19 meeting with Emily Matasar at Ike Box Café

Immediately upon sitting down, Emily expressed extreme unhappiness with my 5/31/19 email to the Public Records Advisory Council regarding the Office of the Public Records Advocate's budget. She stated that the email made it look like I was trying to get others to lobby the Governor's office on behalf of my office and that several unnamed people from the Council had forwarded it to her. She said that others in her office had been unhappy with this, including Misha and that I was "going to" do two things immediately: send out an email telling the PRAC that I was mistaken about the budget and add her to the PRAC email list.

I expressed to Emily that it was not my intention to get anyone to lobby the Governor's office. On the contrary, the intention of my email was to try to find another way that didn't require us to be included in the Governor's omnibus bill (which Emily had previously said she could give me no assurances about). My email was expressly asking the Councilmembers for their advice about what to do regarding the budget situation and HB 2431 (which was languishing in Ways and Means after a fiscal assessment by DHS).

Emily said that she thought she had been clear in our prior meeting that I had "nothing to worry about" with my budget. I told her that in the prior meeting she had simply mentioned several options - including the Emergency Board - which I could potentially explore. I told her that I did not walk away from that meeting with the impression that our budget issues were resolved, which was why I went to the Council to seek advice and why I reached out to LFO and others.

Emily recommended that I not send out emails or make statements that make it look like I am "opposed to" or "outside" of the Governor's office. I said that my office was supposed to have independence and has in the past been treated like we are outside. I cited as an example that I (and not the Governor's Office) had been responsible for finding a way to introduce the Council's two bills. She stated that she had clearly signaled to me the prior fall that she did not like the Council's annual reporting bill (HB 2431) and that she did not think that the Council (or I) should have proposed it. I stated that I recalled no such conversation before the conversation that she and Misha and I had in January when Misha made it clear that he objected to the bill because it did not include localities (thus the city, county, and special district associations would not lobby against it) and that left the Governor in the awkward position of having to potentially oppose it herself. I again stated that the bills were the Council's bills, not my bills, and that the Council had proposed excluding the localities, and that the Council was a democratic body which I did not have complete control over. I asked her what she expected me to do in that scenario and she said "tell them that the bill is unacceptable." I said that I didn't view the compromise as unacceptable because though it is imperfect it was essential for getting the bill passed, understandable because it had previously been employed in the bill that created my office, and excusable because the state agencies are differently situated than the special districts. I expressed that it was not my intention to alienate anyone or create conflict, but that it was my impression that I was meant to act independently.

I told her that we seemed to be once again running into a misunderstanding about my role and my office's role. I reasserted that it was my impression that this office was meant to be independent and that I had been hired because I had a decade of expertise and was meant to have opinions and work with the Council to enact reforms. I told her that I had thought I was hired to be a leader, not merely to follow the Governor's office. Emily recommended that I meet with other state government directors who have better managed their relationships with the Governor's office, especially Ron Bersin at the Government Ethics Commission, in order to get a sense of how I should be behaving and what my relationship to the Governor's office should be.

I once again asked what role it was that the Governor's office thought I should have. I then asked her directly if it was her opinion that I needed to receive approval before Council proposals or reports. She demurred on this, stating that we apparently needed to have more meetings with Misha, etc. about my role.

I told her that I was not comfortable meeting with Misha because he had treated me disrespectfully and in a manner that I found sexist and demeaning in our prior (January) meeting when he had lectured me about how I "knew nothing" about government and should "be less ambitious." Emily seemed surprised by this but conceded that perhaps future meetings should not include Misha.

At this point in the conversation, perhaps in part because of the emotional aspects of recalling the meeting with Misha (shortly before I gave birth to my daughter, now deceased), I began to get emotionally overwhelmed and, embarrassingly, began to cry. Emily attempted to comfort me and the conversation turned to my possible desire to take some bereavement leave in the near future. She left very shortly after.